MODALITY TESTS IN MALAY

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Scholars have generally accepted that Malay has a closed class of auxiliaries that can be aspect markers or modals. There is no consensus, though, as to which words belong to which classes (cf. Asmah & Rama (1985), Imran (1993), Mohd. Isa (1993), Darwis (1989), Mashudi (1981) Ramli (1992)). The items in (1) have been classified by one or more scholars as aspect markers. Likewise, the items in (2) have been classified as modals at some place in the literature.

1) Aspect Markers   (suggested)
    pernah, — (perfective)
    sudah, —(perfective)
    telah, — (preterite)
    sedang — (progressive)
    masih — (progressive)
    tengah — (progressive)
    belum — (negative)
    akan — (future)

2) Modals   (suggested)
    tentu, — 'certain'
    patut, — 'proper, suitable'
    pasti, — 'certain'
    harus, — 'proper, fitting'
    mesti, — 'necessary'
    boleh, — 'can'
    dapat, — 'can'
    mungkin — 'possible'

It is an open question, however, what criteria delineate the category of modals. English has the well-known NICE criteria in (3): a. inversion with the subject, b. negative form with *-n't,* c. 'code' and d. emphatic affirmation (Palmer 1974).

3) a. Must he come?
       *Come he?

    b. He can't smoke.
       *He smoken't.

c. Mary must come and so must Dave.
   *Mary comes and so comes Dave.

d. Jill máy visit.
   ?Jill vísits.

Palmer (1990:4) points out three further criteria that separate English modals from verbs and auxiliaries in (4): a. no -*s* form for the 3rd person singular, b. no non-finite forms (infinitives, past and present participles), and c. no co-occurrence of modals.

4) a. *Karl mays.
       Karl has come.
       Karl comes.

    b. *maying, * to may, *mayed
       having been, to have been, had been
       visiting, to visit, visited

    c. *Carla will must come.
       Carla has been intending to come.

These tests are not claimed to have any universal application. Modality, in particular, has idiosyncratic properties across languages.

A number of these tests will not apply to Malay. Malay has no equivalent of negation with contracted -*n't* or the -*s* form of the third person singular on verbs. Neither does Malay have different morphological forms for finite and non-finite verbs as English does. Malay does not allow code (cf. the English examples in (3c)) as (5) shows.

5) *Ali mesti makan dan juga mesti Reza.
     Ali must eat   and also must Reza
    'Ali must eat and so must Reza.'

On the issue of co-occurrence for the first five words listed in (2), the sentences in (6) are marked with a question mark to reflect the judgment that the two modals together sound redundant or semantically incompatible. This may indicate that there is no syntactic violation in (6).

6) a. ?Ali tentu mesti datang.
       Ali certain must come
       'Ali certainly must come.'

b. ?Ali pasti harus datang.
Ali sure should come
'Ali surely should come.'

c. ?Ali patut mesti datang.
Ali right must come
'Ali rightly must come.'

The same restriction does not hold for the last three words in (2).
Mungkin can occur with both *boleh* and *dapat*.

7) a. Siti mungkin boleh datang.
Siti possible can come
'Siti maybe can come.'

b. Siti mungkin dapat datang.
Siti possible can come.
'Siti maybe can come.

The data in (7) supports classifying *mungkin* as an adverb rather than a true
modal.

Boleh and *dapat* can also occur together, but in this case, *dapat* functions as
a lexical verb meaning "get".

8) a. Siti mendapat wang itu.
Siti meN+get money that
'Siti got the money.'

b. Siti boleh dapat wang itu.
Siti can get money that
'Siti can get the money.'

Malay also has an interesting property with respect to the
morphological possibilities of modals. In English, modals are inert
morphologically; they do not allow any affixation. In Malay, most modals
can combine with the same affixes that lexical items combine with. In
particular, Malay has two prefixes, *meN-* and *di-* that mark the active and
passive forms of a verb respectively.

9) a. Ali membaca buku itu.
Ali meN+read book that
'Ali read the book.'

b. Buku itu dibaca (oleh) Ali.
Book that di+read by Ali
'The book was read by Ali.'

Malay also has the suffix -*kan* which among other functions adds an argument position to the lexical entry of a verb.

10)   a. Ali membaca buku itu.
Ali meN+read book that
'Ali read the book.'

b. Ali membacakan Siti buku itu.
Ali meN+read+kan Siti book that
'Ali read Siti the book.'

The prefixes *meN-* or *di-* together with the suffix -*kan* not only can be added to verbs but also nouns and adjectives to make verbs out of them. That is, it functions like a verbalizing circumfix.

11)   a. buku besar itu
book big   that
'the big book'

b. Siti membesarkan rumahnya.
Siti meN+big+kan house+her
'Siti enlarged her house.

c. Dewan Bahasa membukukan   beberapa buah
Dewan Bahasa meN+book+kan several   classifier
ceritanya   story+his
'Dewan Bahasa made a book out of several of his stories.'

In Malay, this morphological operation can also be applied to all the modals in (2) except *patut*. Also, these affixes can be applied to *dapat* but only in its lexical meaning, so that *mendapatkan* means 'to obtain' or 'to reach (some point)' but not 'to enable'.

12)   a. Siti menentukan kedai itu ditutup.
Siti meN+tentu+kan shop that di+close
'Siti made certain the shop was closed.'

b. Ali memastikan kedai itu ditutup.
   Ali meN+pasti +kan shop that di+close
   'Ali made certain the shop was closed.'

c. Kerajaan mengharuskan jual beli di waktu hari Ahad.
   gov.   meN+harus+kan sell buy at time day Sunday
   'The government permitted buying and selling on
   Sunday.'

d. Kerajaan memestikan setiap rakyatnya
   Government meN+mesti+kan every citizen+its
   memilik kad penganalan.
   meN+possess card identification
   The government made it mandatory for all of its
   citizens to have identification cards.'
                   (Kamus Pelajar Bahasa Malaysia, p. 444)

e. Pelajar tidak dibolehkan merokok.
   Student not di+boleh+kan meN+smoke
   'Students are not permitted to smoke.'

f. Peraturan itu memungkinkan pekerja-pekerja
   Rule that me+mungkin+kan workers
   menjalankan kerja dengan cekap.
   meN+carry-out work with efficient
   'The arrangements made it possible for the workers to
   carry out the work efficiently.'
            (Adapted from Kamus Pelajar Bahasa Malaysia, p. 456)

Hence Malay shows some differences and some similarities with English in regard to the above-mentioned properties. We still, though, have not isolated a criterion to distinguish modals from aspects in Malay. It will turn out that the property of inversion will be crucial in this regard.

   In Malay, all of the words in question may appear in the position NP ___ VP as in (13).

13)   a. Ali ⌈mesti / patut   ⌉   membaca buku itu.
             |harus / pasti |
             |tentu / boleh |
             ⌊dapat / mungkin ⌋

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b. Ali ⎰pernah ⎰ membaca buku itu.
       ⎸sudah ⎸
       ⎸telah ⎸
       ⎱sedang ⎭

This test will not distinguish modals and aspects from all lexical verbs. In particular, there are certain affixless verbs that may also occur in NP ___ VP.

14)   Siti pergi membeli-belah.
       Siti go   shop
       'Siti went shopping.'

However, these verbs can function as main verbs while the auxiliaries cannot (Imran 1993)

15)   a. Siti pergi.
          'Siti went.'

       b. *Siti mesti.
          'Siti must.'

       The position that truly distinguishes modals from auxiliaries is clause-initial position. All the aspect markers except for *pernah* cannot appear clause-initial in questions. *-Kah* is a question particle in the following sentences.

16)   a.   Pernahkah Siti pergi ke sekolah?
             Has Siti gone to school?

       b. * ⎰Belum / sudah ⎰   Siti pergi ke sekolah?
             ⎸telah / sedang ⎸
             ⎱tengah / masih ⎭

       The modal can be clause initial in questions, with or without the particle *-kah* if the modal receives intonational stress.

17)   a. ⎰Mestikah / haruskah   ⎰ Siti pergi ke sekolah?
          ⎸patutkah / pastikah   ⎸
          ⎸tentukah / bolehkah   ⎸
          ⎱dapatkah / mungkinkah ⎭

b. $\begin{bmatrix} \text{MESTI / HARUS} \\ \text{PATUT / PASTI} \\ \text{TENTU / BOLEH} \\ \text{DAPAT / MUNGKIN} \end{bmatrix}$ Siti pergi ke sekolahkah?

However, the negation word *tidak* can still appear in both the position NP___ VP and ____ NP VP. However, a clause-initial *tidak* must have the question particle *-kah*.

18) a. Siti tidak pergi ke sekolah.
        Siti did not go to school.

    b. Tidakkah Siti pergi ke sekolah?
        'Didn't Siti go to school?'

    c. *Tidak Siti pergi ke sekolah?

Tidak however can be distinguished from the modals in that it can appear following the collocation *tidak boleh* and preceding a verb, which carries the meaning of a strong form of necessity. No modal could appear in the place of the second *tidak*.

19) a. Ali tidak boleh tidak pergi ke sekolah.
        Ali not can not go to school.
        'Ali cannot not go to school (Ali must definitely go to school).'

    b. *Ali tidak boleh mesti pergi ke sekolah.

Something still needs to be said about the anomalous behavior of *pernah* with respect to the other aspect markers. The distributional properties of *pernah* suggest that it is an adverb or verbal modifier rather than a true aspect marker. Two aspect markers can be linked via conjunction but *pernah* and another aspect cannot.

20) a. Siti sudah dan akan pergi ke sekolah (sekali lagi).
        Siti perf and will go to school one time again
        'Siti has gone and will go to school (one more time).'

    b. *Siti pernah dan akan pergi ke sekolah (sekali lagi).

In addition, adverbials can be clause-initial in questions as in (21).

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21)   Sangat cepatkah   Siti pergi ke sekolah?
        very   fast+quest Siti go   to school
        'Was it very quickly that Siti went to school?'

This suggests that *pernah* is not the same category as other aspect markers. It, too, appears to be an adverb like *mungkin* rather than an aspect marker.

Let me comment on one last property of Malay modals. Unlike English modals, all of the items in (2) may be negated by a preceding *tidak*.

22)   a.*Jean not must go to school.

       b. Ali tidak mesti pergi ke sekolah.
           'Ali doesn't have to go to school.'

       c.*Jean not can go to school.'

       d. Ali tidak boleh pergi ke sekolah.
           'Ali is not able to go to school. '

Aspect markers also may not be preceded by *tidak* with the exception of *akan* (Ramli 1992).

23)   a. *Ali tidak sudah pergi ke Kuala Lumpur.
          'Ali has not gone to Kuala Lumpur. '

      b. *Ali tidak sedang pergi ke Kuala Lumpur.
          'Ali is not (presently) going to Kuala Lumpur. '

      c. Ali tidak akan pergi ke Kuala Lumpur.
          'Ali will not go to Kuala Lumpur. '

I offer no explanation for the anomalous behavior of *akan*. It may not be a true aspect marker but rather more like the modals in Malay.

Let me compare this with English. The English data concerning modals is more complex. In particular, there are cases where a following *not* appears to negate the modal and other cases where it does not. Thus, we get the following contrast between *must* and *can*.

24)   a. Jean must not go. (modal is not negated)

       b. Jean cannot go.   (modal is negated)

However, the generalization is not so simple. All modals in English also carry some kind of content related to time and possible worlds. So. For example, (24b) in an unmarked context cannot describe a situation in the past but only a present or future situation. That is, it does not have the same meaning as "Jean could not go." When the tense and modality information is factored in, we can see that the negation in (24b) does not negate the tense information. That is, (24b) does not mean either of the paraphrases in (25).

25)   a. Jean was able to go. (negation of the tense information)

       b. Jean was not able to go. (negation of the tense and other
           lexical content of *can*)

Honegger (1997) argues that all modals in English consist of a grammatical category called the *time-modality element*. This element consists of non-propositional content that reflects the speaker's view towards the proposition of the sentence. It cannot be negated, because it is epistemic information, that is it communicates how the speaker conceptualizes the world. This is similar to the inability of vocatives or animal sounds to be negated.

26)   a. *Not John, please come here.
           (Meaning: 'Anybody but John, come here. ')

       b. *Not cockadoodledoo.
           (Meaning: '(The rooster said something that was) not
           cockadoodledoo.')

Only metalinguistic negation is possible here.

(27)   a. Not John. I called for Jean.

       b. Not cockadoodledoo. Say arf arf.

Some modals in addition have propositional content as well which can be negated. Thus, *must* contains only a time-modality element which is why a following negation word does interact with the modal. *Can* contains both a time-modality element and propositional content, which means that a following negation word can interact with the modal.

The situation for Malay appears to be that all modals consist purely of propositional content, and none have a time-modality element. This is

consistent with the observation that Malay does not have a tense system unlike English. The tense morphemes in English are also time-modality elements. This also accounts for why modals in Malay can be negated.

Clause-initial fronting of the auxiliary alone is sufficient to distinguish modals from aspect markers. It is not sufficient to distinguish modals from other lexical verbs such as *hendak* 'want'.

28) Hendakkah Ali pergi ke sekolah?
    want+quest Ali go   to   school
    'Does Ali want to go to school?'

Hendak cannot be classified as a modal itself because it can co-occur with another modal.

29) Ali mesti hendak pergi ke sekolah.
    'Ali must want to go to school.'

Let me sum up the following properties of modals in Malay.

1)   They can take verbal affixation. (*meN-* ___ *-kan* or
     di- ___ *-kan*)
2)   Collocating two modals sounds redundant or semantically anomalous.
3)   They may appear in the position NP ___ VP as many other words can.
4)   They may appear in the position ___ NP VP in questions with or without the question particle *-kah*. Adverbials or verbal modifiers and lexical verbs can also appear in this position but aspect markers cannot.
5)   They may be directly negated.

These properties together suggest that modals in Malay are much closer to verbal modifiers or verbs than modals in English. There are co-occurrence restrictions on modals which may be due to semantic incompatibility. Otherwise, and unlike English, they do not form a well-defined separate category from lexical verbs.

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